

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 1, Leatherhead 1

WYCOMBE Wanderers, held to a draw by Enfield in their last home Rothmans Isthmian League game some three weeks ago, dropped a further two points against one of the leading teams at Loakes Park on Tuesday night. A goal up at half time, the Blues allowed Leatherhead to fight back and take a share of the spoils.

Although there were some moments of good football, I felt this match was a pretty poor reflection of top Isthmian League soccer. There were far too many niggling fouls and too many exhibitions of what is politely called gamesmanship.

It was sad to see two of the best non-league footballing sides resorting to such basic tactics and Leatherhead were by far the more guilty team, although Wycombe did dish out far more fouls than usual. Colin Downey's unconvincing refereeing must take much of the blame for the abnormally high number of fouls.

Wycombe were glad to arrange this top league encounter after their 2-1 F.A. Trophy exit at Runcorn on Saturday. In the end, their decision to take on Leatherhead must have been greeted with mixed fortunes.

Wanderers are currently fifth in the table and their goal famine must be a constant source of worry to manager Ted Powell. The Blues desperately need another forward to add more power to the front line.

The manager made one surprise change to the team on Tuesday, dropping John Maskell in favour of Peter Spittle in goal.

If the game had continued as it started, there would have been no arguments about the entertainment. Only 30 seconds had elapsed when Ian Pearson tested veteran goalkeeper John Swannell from the edge of the box while two minutes later Peter Page, up front for the injured John Baker, missed a great chance by shooting high.

Swannell was kept busy with a shot from Pearson that dipped viciously over the bar and then Paul Birdseye finished a lightning overlap with a low drive that Swannell couldn't hold. No-

one was there to pick up the 'scraps'.

With Howard Kennedy tidying up well in midfield and Mick Holifield bursting through dangerously, the prospects looked good for Wanderers.

But Leatherhead began to bring a little 'gamesmanship' into the match which resulted in many stoppages. Not surprisingly, the Blues lost their rhythm.

There were no serious fouls from the Tanners. The occasional ankle tap, throwing the ball away at free kicks — the type of offences that made it difficult for Mr Downey to use his notebook.

In keeping with the general standard of the game, both goals were scrappy. Wycombe's came in the 39th minute when Birdseye crossed into the middle. Derek Wells tried to clear but sliced his kick which flew over Swannell and hit the far upright. Howard Kettleborough bundled the ball home and the referee didn't wait to hear Leatherhead's appeals for handball.

PENALTY APPEALS

In the ten minutes before and after half time, Wanderers produced some neat attacking moves and Kennedy forced a

first time shot just wide after good work by Peter Cruse, John Priestley and Pearson.

There were loud appeals for a penalty when Dave Reid fouled Priestley in the 54th minute but an indirect free kick was awarded and Wycombe failed to make any use of it.

Tanners equalised on the hour. Pearson's back pass was almost intercepted by Kelly who forced a corner. Kelly took it and when the ball was cleared back to him, he drove a powerful shot into the packed penalty area. Reid tried a back heel, the ball bounced loose and struck the upright during the scramble before Peter Page got the final touch.

The equaliser did Leatherhead a power of good as Wycombe pushed upfield in search of a winning goal, they left themselves exposed at the back. Twice Kelly sent shots over the top from good scoring positions and Page was guilty of the same offence before the close.

In the 63rd minute Kelly intercepted Spittle's short goal-kick but Phillips cleared the danger. Once again play became heated and Mr Downey spoke to several players, including Pearson, Kennedy and Holifield of Wycombe.

The standard of play deteriorated rapidly with many fouls being committed. It must be said that neither side looked championship material.

LITTLE TIME

Tony Horseman replaced Cruse with only 10 minutes left but 'Bodger' had little time to make an impact. Instead the chances came at the other end with Reid setting up Kelly for a shot which he drilled over.

Wanderers tried to pressurise in the closing stages and at times Leatherhead's back four were more than happy to thump the ball anywhere to safety. Kelly was too high again from Woffinden's nod down but in the end the 1-1 stalemate was about the right result.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, H. Kennedy, J. Priestley, M. Holifield, P. Cruse (sub A. Horseman 80 mins), H. Kettleborough, I. Pearson.

LEATHERHEAD: J. Swannell, C. Brookes, D. Reid, D. Wells, R. Eaton, J. Bailey, (Sub C. Woffinden 61 mins), J. Cooper, W. Smith, P. Page, C. Kelly, J. Davis.

Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Kettleborough (39), Leatherhead — Page (60).

Referee: C. Downey (Isleworth). **Attendance:** 830.

Latest table

**ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE
DIVISION ONE
(up to and inc. 8/2/77)**

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	28	16	6	6	49	26	54
Enfield	27	15	8	4	37	23	53
Tilbury	30	14	8	8	40	34	50
Leatherhead	27	15	3	9	46	26	48
Wycombe	27	14	6	7	40	24	48
W'stow	27	14	3	10	43	34	45
Hendon	27	12	5	10	88	33	41
Leytonstone	27	11	8	8	42	37	41
Tooting	27	11	6	10	51	47	39
Hitchin	23	12	3	8	30	30	39
Sutton	27	11	5	11	33	36	38
Slough	24	11	4	9	33	30	37
Barking	28	11	4	13	37	40	37
Bishops	27	10	6	11	37	34	36
Croydon	24	8	6	10	22	25	30
Staines	20	8	5	7	19	18	29
Southall	25	8	5	12	35	41	29
Kingstonian	29	8	5	16	32	45	29
Woking	27	7	6	14	34	45	27
Hayes	26	8	3	15	29	46	27
Dulwich	25	4	6	15	27	43	18
Ilford	24	2	5	17	12	49	11